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BOOKS

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AS DANIELS SAW THE NAVY IN WAR

OUR NAVY AT WAR. By Josephus Daniels, Secretary of the Navy, 1913 to 1921. George H. Doran Company.

JOSEPHUS DANIELS always was an optimist about navy affairs while he was Secretary of the Navy from 1913 to 1921, and now that he has told what the navy did during the world war he demonstrates in his narrative that he is a good sport. For in spite of the many and bitter attacks that were made on him in that troubled time he does not make a single reference to any of them, nor does he wreak any such revenge as he might have done through this medium. In this respect it may be said that truly does he live up to the description of his character set down in the pages of Rear Admiral Bradley A. Fiske's autobiography, namely, that "Secretary Daniels impressed me as being a Christian gentleman."

In its general outlines and in many of its details there is little in Mr. Daniels's story that has not been told before in volumes devoted to single phases of the United States Navy's war operations. For example, his chapter on the extraordinary task of laying the great mine fields, known as the North Sea barrage, from Norway to the Orkneys, is much more fully described in the account written by Capt. Reginald R. Belknap; the story of "Sending Sims to Europe" is also more extensively presented in that officer's book, "The Victory at Sea," and the same qualification can be applied to the chapter on the fighting of the marines in Belleau Wood and elsewhere, and the work of our destroyers and submarines in European waters.

But Mr. Daniels's history has one great merit that these other books lack. This is that it tells in its 374 pages the complete story of the work of the navy in the world war, giving so many details and so much precise information about officers and their commands, ships of all classes and just what they did, the valuable contributions made to the winning of the war by civilians, that it makes a special place for itself, a very special place, in any library or shelf devoted to war books.

"What was the greatest thing America did in the world war?" is a question Mr. Daniels says he has often been asked, "and it is easily answered. It was the raising and training of an army of 4,000,000 men, a navy of over 600,000 and the safe transportation of over two million troops to Europe. And all this was accomplished in eighteen months." War began for the navy five minutes after President Wilson signed the war resolution passed by Congress on April 6, 1917, when the navy radio operators flashed that news to every ship and station in the service. The far distant vessels on the Asiatic station knew it before the "extras" were on the street, and the fleet was mobilized that same afternoon in accordance with the plan of the preceding March 21. Admiral Henry T. Mayo afterward said he did not have to "give a single order of any kind or description to pass the fleet from a peace to a war basis." Complete instructions and plans, brought up to date, had been issued two weeks previous and mobilization was completed without an hour's delay.

To the general public the place where the fleet was mobilized was a profound mystery, although we have long known now that it was in the York River. Once before, in February, 1917, the fleet had been moved to a secret base in Cuba as a protection against possible attack while conducting the annual maneuvers that were begun at Guantanamo, a secret that was kept as faithfully as that of the base in York River. To many of the officers and men then began that long stress of untiring labor 3,000 miles away from any possibility of action that they longed for, and which was denied them, first by the demands of training service at home and again by that major strategy which forbade the allied navys' attacking the Germans at home. On this point Mr. Daniels says:

> Whatever may be said of the wisdom of the ancient prudent doctrine of a "fleet in being," I shall always believe that if, at the opportune time, such fighting sailors as Beatty and Carpenter, Mayo and Rodman and Wilson could have joined in a combined assault they would have found a way or made one to sink the German fleet, in spite of Heligoland and all the frowning German guns.

The "I told you so" note is notable by its absence, however. Students of naval affairs will recall that Mr. Daniels was one of the earliest advocates of disarmament, having recommended this course in his first annual report in 1913. Yet he merely refers to that fact in its proper historical sequence, while describing "Building a Thousand Ships," and notes that the Conference for the Limitation of Armament was going on in Washington while he was writing that particular section of his book. In view of the abuse poured out on him at the time, this restraint from gloating is particularly praiseworthy. This element in the book does not appear to be an attempt at subtility, but Mr. Daniels's shrewdness is perfectly apparent in his frequent quotations from Admiral Sims's book and also from many of that officer's cable messages (out of one of which he turns a compliment to Sims) and the quotation of a glowing attribute to the navy paid by Senator Lodge in a formal speech in the Senate on June 6, 1918. In the light of the subsequent trouble caused Daniels by Lodge and Sims, this is a particularly neat revenge.

Josephus Daniels has never wavered in his admiration for Woodrow Wilson, a trait that he reveals to the full in his chapter on "President Wilson as a Strategist." He opens this chapter by writing: "The world knows President Wilson as a scholar, teahcer and historian; as executive and statesman. But it does not know him, as we did, as a master of military strategy. His grasp of the whole situation, his clear conception of army and navy policies and operations, his rare judgment, were demonstrated in important decisions and his personal interest and influence had a marked effect on the conduct of the war." And again he says: "Long before we entered the war, when the allied navies seemed impotent before the onslaughts of the submarines, President Wilson pointed to the vigorous policies which later proved so successful. 'Daniels, why don't the British convoy their merchant ships and thus protect them from the submarines?' he asked me early in the war. As sinkings increased he pointed out that their practice of sailing ships had proved a failure, and asked, 'Why now, with their distressing experiences, do they hesitate about adopting the convoy system?'"

Josephus Daniels, former Secretary of the United States Navy.

He also quotes Wilson's personal message to Sims asking for such advice from Sims "as you would give if you were handling the situation yourself, and if you were running a navy of your own," in which he said that the British Admiralty was "helpless to the point of panic," and in which Wilson expressed the opinion that it was no "time for prudence," a point he subsequently developed more fully in his address to the officers of the fleet on August 11, 1917. And here is another novel glimpse of Wilson at that time and in this connection:

> "When we were transporting soldiers through the infested zones he was anxious, intensely interested, and read every cablegram concerning the troopships. When he did not come in person on crucial days there would come from the White House frequent memoranda written by himself on his little typewriter asking for some information or making an illuminating suggestion, signed 'W. W.' Those 'W. W.' notes never had a spare word, and they showed the same clearness and vision which John Hay tells us Lincoln had when he would go over to see Stanton or Gideon Welles in the dark days of the civil war" Daniels also says that "I do not know a civilian who employs more naval terms" than Wilson does in talking, a note that may be as surprising as it was to read in David Bispham's autobiography that the former President had a good tenor voice.

The former Secretary of the Navy has exercised admirable judgment in the high lights he picks out of the manifold activities of the navy to illustrate the resourcefulness and the heroism of the officers and men. These are strung like brilliants along the chain of his narrative, from the tales of the airmen in France, the crews of the destroyers and submarines, the repairing of the interned ships that the Germans thought they had put out of action for the duration of the war, the work of the submarine chasers, the gallantry of the gun crews on merchantmen. None of these tales are new, but they deserve a place in any history of our navy in the world war, and Daniels has selected the best of them.

He describes the navy's big guns that were mounted on railway cars and did enormous destruction at ranges of from twenty to twenty-five miles along the German lines (one shell killed forty German soldiers and wounded sixty at this distance); tells of the work of the transport force with excellent statistics, of what improvements were made in our radio service and the erection of the great Lafayette station in France; and gives the first complete description we have had of the operations of the naval base at the Azores, repeating the thrilling tale of the collier Orion driving away a German submarine by firing her guns over a building on a wharf, a feat that brought to the Orion's commander in the Azores the fame of "having a cigar named after him" as to which Mr. Daniels says: "And I know of no more conclusive evidence of popular favor than that."

Civilian inventors of "ways to end the war" furnished occasional notes of humor in all this grave business. One citizen had a novel mine catcher, which couldn't possibly miss one, "which sees and feels for you" and which he offered to the Government for the small sum of $250,000. Another one had an automatic field gun "that, placed in Washington, could be operated by electricity from Texas," one man being able to "operate a thousand of them." Another suggestion was to mobilize all the dogs in the United States and send them to France and "sick" them on the Germans; while still another suggestion was for mechanical soldiers which would only have to be filled up with ammunition, wound up, and then started at the German lines.

The many photographs and reproductions of paintings (including an admirable portrait of Daniels by R. S. Meryman) add much to the high interest of the book, and the index is of that much desired kind which really "works." The narrative ends with that note of optimism which is so characteristic of the author when it says:

> "If all the criticisms of whatever kind or character that have been made be lumped together they would not tilt the scales one degree if balanced against the navy's achievements." W. B. McCORMICK.

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Pulitzer Awards.

FOR the second time Booth Tarkington is the winner of the prize for the best American novel of the year, "Alice Adams," repeating for 1921 the success of "The Magnificent Ambersons" in 1918. The $1,000 prize for the best book of verse was adjudged to Edwin Arlington Robinson. Eugene O'Neill received the prize for the best American play, Hamlin Garland the prize for the best American biography, Rollin Kirby of the *World* the prize for the best cartoon and Frank M. O'Brien of THE NEW YORK HERALD the prize for the best editorial of the year, entitled "The Unknown Soldier," and appearing in THE NEW YORK HERALD for November 11, 1921.